

USDA-ARS-NPA
Fort Collins, Colorado
Policy Memorandum

DATE:	August 24, 2005
SUBJECT:	Fort Collins Travel Policy
NUMBER:	FM-05-005
EFFECTIVE DATE:	Immediately Until Replaced or Superseded

1. Purpose

This document establishes the travel policy for Fort Collins, Colorado (Research Units and Area Office).

2. Procedures

- Employees must procure airline tickets through the Department Contract with (EDS) to honor contractual agreements with certain airlines, such as with city pairs, and to allow for refunds should the traveler's orders be cancelled, delayed, or diverted. Reimbursement will be denied for tickets purchased directly from an airline or from a Commercial Travel Office (CTO) not under contract with the Department. The three exceptions to using contract carrier are: 1) space not available; 2) schedule of flights on contract air not consistent with government policy; and, 3) cost comparison substantiates use of non-contract air. When claiming any of these three exceptions, the reason number must appear in Block 23 of the traveler's AD-202—and the tickets must be purchased through the Department contractor. As a reminder, airline tickets must be purchased with the contractor-issued government travel charge card to be eligible for reimbursement. Foreign tickets and tickets for non Federal travelers can be billed to the central billing account.
- All government travel must be paid for with the contractor-issued government travel charge card. The following items are normally payable with the government card: restaurants (if accepted), lodging, vehicle rentals, gasoline charges, airport parking, and airline tickets. Cash should be used only to pay for those expenses which, as a general rule, cannot be charged; e.g., laundry/ dry cleaning, parking, local transportation system, taxi and tips. The ATM feature of your travel charge card should be used, when authorized, to obtain cash for official travel expenses, in lieu of travel advances. Use of the government travel card when not on official travel is prohibited and will not be tolerated.
- Actual Subsistence: A reminder that approval of actual subsistence **must be made in advance**. The Area Director will no longer post-approve travel authorizations for actual subsistence or acceptance of outside funds. Requests for actuals are to be in

the Area Travel Office two weeks prior to the proposed travel. It is the traveler's responsibility to ensure that s/he has the appropriate authorizations and approvals in advance of travel. Costs for lodging in excess of per diem, if not approved in advance, will be borne by the traveler.

- Authorization of Rented Conveyance must consider the use of local transit system, shuttle service or taxicabs first before a rental vehicle is authorized. For domestic rentals (within the 50 states, Puerto Rico, US territories and possessions) the government will not reimburse for Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) insurance. CDW insurance and trip liability insurance in foreign areas (if required by the law of the country) is reimbursable (ARS requires insurance for all vehicles traveling in Mexico). The rental agreement provides CDW coverage within the Continental United States (CONUS) while on official duty, unless you are willfully and wantonly negligent.
- Employees who fail to fill the gas tank before returning the rental vehicle are responsible for **excessive** gasoline costs charged by the rental car agency. For personal use of a rental car (reconstructed travel), the employee is responsible for any additional costs, as well as loss or damage to the vehicle. In this case it is strongly recommended that the employee elect the CDW coverage and pay for it out of pocket.
- Taxi/Limo Fares and Tips: Fare plus a tip of 15% of the fare is allowable. A tip of \$1.00 each way to the hotel/motel/airport parking courtesy vehicle driver is reimbursable.
- Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Reimbursement: when POV usage is determined to be advantageous to the government, reimbursement allowance will be at the rate of 40.5 cents per mile. When a government vehicle would be more advantageous, the reimbursement will be at the rate of 28.5 cents per mile. Use of POV when the employee is assigned a government vehicle will be at the rate of 10.5 cents per mile. These rates are subject to change based on GSA issuances. No reimbursement will be paid when use of POV is incompatible with the mission (e.g., government transportation is provided). For example, if an employee arrives too late to travel in a government van taking employees to an off-site training location, s/he receives no POV reimbursement. Passengers in the POV are not entitled to mileage reimbursement.
- Incidental Expenses are intended to be paid out of the \$3.00 per day remaining after meal deductions for CONUS travel. They include 1) fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, and hotel maids; 2) fees for transportation between places of lodging or business and places where meals are taken, if suitable meals cannot be obtained at the TDY site; and, 3) postage costs associated with filing travel vouchers and payment of government-sponsored charge card billings.

- ATM service charges for cash withdrawals to be used as travel advances for miscellaneous expenses are reimbursable, but **only when charged to the contractor-issued government travel charge card**. There may be two service charges for ATM cash withdrawal: 1) ATM user's fee (this fee is not charged if you use a Bank of America ATM, Bank of America ATMs are located at Diamond Shamrock and Foothills Fashion Mall); and 2) a Bank of America fee of .019% of the amount advanced (this is always charged). Any travel card holder may use this option but a PIN is required. Call the bank if you no longer remember your PIN.
- Reimbursement expenses for laundry, cleaning and pressing of clothing at a TDY location are reimbursable as a miscellaneous travel expense; however, you must incur a minimum of four consecutive nights' lodging on official travel to qualify for this reimbursement.
- Round Trip travel of 24 hours or less without lodging is payable at the rate of 75% of the appropriate M&IE rate, as long as travel exceeds the length of the employee's normal duty day by four hours. That means if you work an 8-hour duty day, travel must be greater than 12 hours for you to be eligible for M&IE.
- Complimentary breakfasts provided by the hotel/motel and meals furnished on commercial aircraft are not considered to be deductible meals. All meals provided at government expense (e.g., included in a registration fee) must be deducted from the M&IE, whether the traveler consumes the meal or not.
- When a spouse and/or family members accompany an employee on TDY, traveler must have the hotel/motel indicate the rate for single occupancy on the receipt. Reimbursement will be on the single occupancy rate.
- Overbooked Flights: If you voluntarily give up your seat you can keep any incentives you receive from the airline, but official travel still ends at the time you should have returned. So, if it is necessary for you to stay overnight, you would need to take leave and pay for lodging costs. If the airline bumps you against your will, you remain in TDY status and any incentives received become the property of the government.
- Lodging taxes are limited to the taxes on reimbursable lodging cost, e.g., lodging rate is \$60.00 per night and if you elect to stay at a hotel costing \$100.00 per night you can only claim the amount of taxes on \$60.00 which is the maximum authorized lodging.
- Reimbursement of telephone calls of a personal nature during official travel are authorized as being in the interest of the government when an employee, traveling in excess of one night on government business, makes a brief call (maximum reimbursement is \$5.00 per day for domestic travel and \$15.00 per day for foreign travel) to his or her residence, or to a member of the immediate family within the local duty station's immediate commuting area. According to DR 2300-3, "the

purpose of the telephone call is to discuss household matters with the spouse, minor children, or anyone sharing the same residence.” DR 2300-3 also states that “claims will be allowed for calls placed to the local duty station commuting area on the day of return from official travel only for notification of a change in schedule.” Local calls made at the TDY location are reimbursable only if they were made for official business purposes. Remember, your signature on a travel voucher certifies that all reimbursable calls were made in accordance with DR 2300-

4. Point of Contact

For further information please contact the Deputy Area Director at 970-492-7001.

/s/

W.H. BLACKBURN
Area Director
Northern Plains Area